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ABSTRACT

The charge of the Full Day Kindergarten Committee of the Bay Shore Union Free School District was to determine whether Bay Shore schools should initiate a full day kindergarten or continue with the present half day program. Five methods were used to analyze the potential of the full day program: (1) full day kindergarten visitations, (2) faculty survey, (3) review of research, (4) examination of current academic status of Bay Shore second graders, and (5) workshop attendance by committee members. Findings indicated that implementation of a full day program would improve educational opportunity. The committee recommended that the full day program begin in September 1984 and that a second committee be established to develop a meaningful full day kindergarten program. (BJD)

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REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

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RATIONALE

As an outgrowth of the Long-Range Plan which was adopted by the Board of Education in December 1981, and in conjunction with the knowledge that kindergarten is a critical time in a child's school life, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Gene L. Schmidt, asked for volunteers to serve on a Full-Day Kindergarten Committee. The Committee was formed with the following membership:

Mr. Peter Bielitz	Building Principal
Ms. Linda Carroll	Speech and Language Therapist
Ms. Mary Ellen Clark	Community Representative
Ms. Evelyn Daily	Community Representative
Ms. Doris Donner	Community Representative
Ms. Joan Kenedy	Community Representative
Ms. Elizabeth Kirwan	Community Representative
Ms. Marilyn LaPenta	Community Representative
Ms. Carol McCormack	Kindergarten Teacher
Ms. Mary O'Keefe	School Nurse/Teacher
Ms. Charlotte Patterson	High School English Teacher
Dr. Robert J. Roelle	Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Mr. Arthur J. Smith	School Psychologist

The charge to the Committee was to determine whether it would be educationally better for Bay Shore Schools to have a full-day kindergarten or to remain with the present half-day program.

METHODOLOGY

The Committee, at its initial meeting, discussed a number of different ways it might familiarize itself with the full-day kindergarten and its potential for

successfully impacting upon the academic, cognitive, and social/emotional development of children. It chose the following methods:

1. Full-Day Kindergarten Visitations: The Committee became aware that certain school districts on Long Island had adopted full-day kindergarten programs and subsequently believed that a visit to these programs and contact with appropriate staff would prove most valuable to its information-gathering process. Toward that end, various Committee members visited the following school districts: Hauppauge, North Babylon, Bayport-Blue Point , Lawrence and Valley Stream.

2. Faculty Survey: It was believed beneficial to the study process that professional staff be given an opportunity to express their thoughts regarding a full-day kindergarten. For this purpose, questionnaires were sent to all primary teachers and to a sampling of teachers on the intermediate, junior high, and senior high levels.

3. Review of Research: Data from the State Education Department, Education Research Services, Inc., and other sources was reviewed to ascertain the findings regarding the educational value of full-day kindergarten programs.

4. Examination of Current Academic Status of Bay Shore Second Graders: Information regarding achievement in basic skills was received from the Chapter I Program.

5. Workshop Attendance: Ten Committee members attended the workshop entitled, "The Full-Day Kindergarten: Does It Set the Stage for a More Successful School Experience?" This workshop was held in Smithtown on December 2, 1983.

COMMITTEE FINDINGS

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN VISITATIONS

Visits to kindergartens (ranging from programs as old as 40 years, to one established only three years ago) indicated that the expanded day (usually a full six hours) was very effective in preparing children for first grade. In one district, the first grade curriculum had to be "upgraded." Children were found to have: better listening skills, greater ability to follow directions, broader experiences, and greater development of language and gross motor skills by the time they entered first grade. In one district, third grade standardized test scores were described as "significantly higher," (at the .01 level of confidence).

Full-day kindergartens had full community support, even from those parents who had initially opposed the program. Initial objections were based upon misconceptions; for example, some parents feared that the children's day would be spent doing first grade work, or they feared that the day would be too demanding, too tiring for children so young. In reality, the full-day kindergarten relaxed the pacing of the kindergarten curriculum; and very, very few of the children needed to sleep during the rest periods provided. Parent reaction was overwhelmingly laudatory of the program which their children had enjoyed while it bred independence and improved self-image. Parents also valued the closer parent-teacher contact provided when the student-teacher ratio was reduced from 45 to 22, as teachers dealt with one full-day class rather than two half-day classes.

Full-day programs provided more time for the teacher to spend with each child. As a result, there was earlier identification of children with learning problems, time to work in small groups, time to give individual help for either enrichment or remediation. The districts visited indicated that they provided equal educational opportunity for all children while lessening the need for special educational programs in later years.

All-day kindergarten proved to provide many additional educational benefits. The teacher's time and energy, concentrated on one rather than two classes, allowed for greater personal attention and understanding of student needs. An unhurried atmosphere provided for more follow-through time and greater depth/breadth of exploration. The kindergarten program was better coordinated and unified with primary grades, providing a better transition process between kindergarten and first grade.

What we learned from our visits reinforced what Nancy K. Naron said in "The Need for Full-Day Kindergarten":

> In full-day kindergarten, the teacher has the time to regularly assess each child's progress, to diagnose deficiencies, and to alter the instruction accordingly. As a result, each child can regularly encounter success, develop a positive attitude about school and learning, and require special education services less frequently. These benefits are immeasurable to the child's later success in school and in life.

FACULTY SURVEY

The survey, sent to a cross-section of the faculty, drew 103 responses. The questions asked of the faculty were as follows:

1. Based on whatever knowledge you have of kindergarten programs and their value, are you in favor of a full-day kindergarten program for Bay Shore students?

2. In your opinion, what are some of the positive aspects of such a program?

3. Briefly list your biggest concerns about a full-day kindergarten.

4. Other comments.

Below is a summary of the teachers' responses:

	Classroom Teachers			Special Education Teachers			Special Area Teachers			Administration/ Psychologists		
LEVEL	Yes	No	Undec.	Yes	No	Undec.	Yes	No	Undec.	Yes	No	Undec.
K-3	35	1	2	7	0	0	12	0	0	4	1	0
4-6	18	2	0	3	0	0	2	0	0			
7-9	6	2	2	----------			----------					
10-12	6	0	0	----------			----------					

TOTALS: 93 Yes
6 No
4 Undecided
103 Responses

When asked to list the positive aspects of a full-day kindergarten program, most stated that a full day will provide more time for exploring the current kindergarten concepts in depth: that the children will have an opportunity for more "hands on" experiences, more science and language experiences, more gross and fine motor activities, and field trips. In addition, more time would be provided for greater academic skill development.

Many teachers also foresee the benefit of a less fragmented day for the children, some of whom either spend the other half of their day in deprived cultural environments which may exist in some homes, or in a babysitting situation or day

care program if their parents work. In these cases in particular, the full-day kindergarten would provide an atmosphere of security, warmth, structure, and learning for a greater portion of the child's day. The children will spend these extra hours reinforcing appropriate classroom behaviors, routines, and socialization skills.

Other positive aspects foreseen by our staff were the availability of time for support services without interrupting the prime time-on-task activities and the opportunity to better prepare children for the first grade in regard to length of school day, routines, behavior, and work skills.

The responses indicate two major areas of concern regarding the implementation of a full-day kindergarten: time and money. Thirty percent of the respondents feared that five-year-olds might have difficulty adjusting to a full day of school. A related concern was that there must be a variety of activities and adequate provision for rest, to minimize fatigue. The second item of concern (to 20% of the respondents) was that the Board must underwrite the cost of additional support staff, equipment, and materials for all kindergarten classrooms if they support a meaningful full-day program for all children.

Generally, it must be noted that the Bay Shore faculty has expressed overwhelming support for the full-day kindergarten, as reflected in the fact that 90% of the staff responding to the survey feel that such a program is desirable.

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

The research was reviewed for the purpose of determining full-day kindergarten's success. The following reflects a summary of some of the findings:

1) A study by Cleminshaw and Guidubaldi (11/78) entitled, "The Effect of Time and Structure on Kindergarten Student Social and Academic

Performances," indicates that children attending all-day alternate day kindergartens do, in fact, score significantly higher (at the .06 level of confidence) on academic measure (Metropolitan Readiness Test) than those in half-day programs.

2) A longitudinal study conducted in the Cincinnati Public Schools (1971) revealed higher level scores (at the .001 level of confidence) for youngsters in all-day kindergarten compared with their peers who had been enrolled in the half-day program. In a follow-up study conducted when these same children were in grades four and eight, the superiority evinced by the all-day kindergarten group had been maintained. Specifically, the differences were noted to be at the .01 level of confidence for those in fourth grade and at the .05 level of confidence at the eighth grade.

3) In a major study by Jack Humphrey (1980) entitled, A Study of the Effectiveness of Full Day Kindergarten," he found that full-day kindergarten children scored significantly higher than half-day kindergarten children in most of the readiness test areas of the California Achievement Tests, scored significantly higher than anticipated on the Boehm Tests of Basic Concepts, and scored significantly higher, based on T-Test results, on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test in first grade. In addition, he found that most parents (91%) of the children who attended full-day kindergarten preferred this type of program.

4) An important follow-up study by Jack Humphrey entitled, A Longitudinal Study of the Effectiveness of Full-Day Kindergarten" (1982), was conducted when these same children entered third and fourth grades. The results of this study indicated that the full-day kindergarten children had higher academic and conduct marks on report cards, were retained less frequently, possessed higher self-confidence, and demonstrated higher standardized achievement test scores.

While reviewing the research, we did note one study whose results did not support full-day kindergarten. The study was entitled, "Effects of Length of School Day on Kindergarten School Performance and Parent Satisfaction" (1982). Its purpose was to measure the effectiveness of changing the length and regularity of the kindergarten day on pre-reading skills, attending skills, and parental opinion of the program. Results indicated that there were no significant differences between the groups on measures of school achievement and behavior. It is important to note, however, that the study was based only on changing the length of the school day during the second half of the school year and on an all-day alternate day basis.

While this is only a sampling of the research, the majority of the material reviewed illustrates the fact that full-day kindergarten is educationally better than half-day programming.

ACADEMIC STATUS OF BAY SHORE SECOND GRADERS

One of the points made in the research has to do with the preventative aspect of full-day kindergarten - the issue being that full-day kindergartens may very well reduce the need for special education or intensive remediation in later years. The Board of Education is aware that, as of last spring, 32% of our second grade children were in need of remedial instruction in reading and/or math, and hence were eligible for the Chapter I 1983 Summer School Program. In addition, it is important to note that last year (1982-83) 23% of the first graders and 26% of the second graders were eligible for Chapter I assistance during the school year. This year, 18% of the first graders and 29% of the second graders were found to be eligible. The point being made is that a significant number of first and second grade students are already academically behind. It is the Committee's contention that a well-conceived full-day kindergarten program has the potential to lessen these numbers and send better prepared children to first grade.

WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE

Ten members of the Committee attended the full-day kindergarten workshop on December 2, 1983. The major point made by the speakers which included superintendents, board members, parents, teachers and a New York State Education representative, was that full-day kindergartens are educationally better for children than half-day programs. Major goals emphasized for full-day kindergartens were social/emotional, language, cognitive, and psychomotor development. An issue expressed by many was that full-day kindergartens should not attempt to take the place of a first grade. Some key points made were as follows:

1. Superintendent Kevin McGuire of Half Hollow Hills stated that in his district, where they are committed to quality education, the importance of full-day kindergarten was immediately recognized.

2. A parent who had some children attend half-day kindergarten and one attend a full-day program spoke of the "joy of learning" having a better chance of taking place in full-day programs.

3. Bertha Campbell of the New York State Education Department indicated that full-day kindergartens provide the time for children to "feel confident in their competence as learners."

In summary, the attending members of the Bay Shore Committee were impressed by the positive views and commitment of those people already involved in the ongoing process of full-day kindergarten programs.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through our studies, the importance of kindergarten has been underscored. As Nancy K. Naron states so well:

> Kindergarten must account for the widely diverse abilities of today's kindergarteners, and focus not only on social and physical but also on cognitive areas of learning. It must provide identification and remediation of early learning deficits as well as individualized instruction according to each child's needs. In short, the new function requires more instructional time and better instructional tools than exist in traditional half-day kindergarten programs. One way to fulfill this function is to implement a carefully constructed full-day kindergarten program.

The time has come in Bay Shore to take a giant step along the road toward improved educational opportunity. The Committee believes that full-day kindergarten can do this by providing the fertile soil in which children can be more effectively nourished and helped to realize tneir individual potential.

Therefore, the Committee, having thoroughly reviewed the issues, unanimously and without reservation, recommends to the Superintendent and the Board of Education the implementation of a full-day kindergarten program for September 1984.

Secondly, the Committee recommends the immediate establishment of a second committee to develop a meaningful full-day kindergarten program for September 1984. Some issues to be addressed would include:

1. The impact a full-day kindergarten would have on special programs.
2. Exploration of a rest time in full-day kindergarten.
3. Impact on the cafeteria program.
4. The necessity for possible additions to the kindergarten program.
5. The impact on the need for aides.
6. Appropriate class size for full-day kindergartens.

7. The impact on the Bay Shore community of a full-day kindergarten.

8. Parent orientation to full-day kindergarten.

9. Appropriate staff inservice.

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